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COMBINATION RING AND OBJECT HOLDER WITH INTEGRAL SPRING

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application claims priority from U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/343,044 filed December 21, 2001, the entire disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a combination ring and object holder with an integral spring. In the preferred embodiments disclosed herein, the object holder is designed to secure and retain candy, such as a lollipop. Furthermore, in the preferred embodiments disclosed herein, the spring is a helical spring commonly referred to as a Slinky® (a registered trademark of Poof Products, Inc. of Plymouth, Michigan).

The Slinky® toy was invented in 1945 by Richard James, a naval engineer who was experimenting with tension springs. Since its introduction into the marketplace, various manufacturers have developed toy products and novelties incorporating a spring, such as a Slinky®. Nevertheless, Applicant is aware of no efforts to include such a spring in a object holder as described herein or to attach such a spring to a ring.

It is a paramount object of the present invention to provide a combination ring and object holder with an integral spring, resulting in a novelty item that has great consumer appeal, especially to children.

This and other objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent upon a reading of the following description.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a combination ring and object holder with an integral spring that is designed to secure and retain an object, such as a lollipop. Specifically, the combination ring and object holder includes a ring, preferably fabricated from plastic, with a substantially flat upper surface to which a spring is secured. The combination ring and object holder further includes a coupling member secured to the opposite end of the spring which defines a central opening in the upper surface thereof for receiving and retaining an object.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a preferred embodiment of a combination ring and object holder in accordance with the present invention, the integral spring being in a compressed state;

Figure 2 is an exploded perspective view of the combination ring and object holder of Figure 1;

Figure 3 is a perspective view of the combination ring and object holder of Figure 1, the integral spring being in an extended state;

Figure 4 is an end view of the spring base plate of the combination ring and object holder taken along line 4-4 of Figure 2;

Figure 5 is a sectional view of the combination ring and object holder taken along line 5-5 of Figure 3;

Figure 6 is a perspective view of an alternate preferred embodiment of a combination ring and object holder in accordance with the present invention, the integral spring being in a compressed state;

Figure 7 is an exploded perspective view of the combination ring and object holder of Figure 6; and

Figure 8 is a perspective view of the combination ring and object holder of Figure 6, the integral spring being in an extended state.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a combination ring and object holder with an integral spring. Figures 1-3 provide various perspective views of a preferred embodiment of a combination ring and object holder (generally indicated by reference numeral 10) made in accordance with the present invention. The combination ring and object holder 10 includes a ring 12, preferably fabricated from plastic, with a substantially flat upper surface 14 to which an integral spring 16 is secured. The ring 12 itself is not limited to being substantially circular and could include two separate prongs (as shown in the Figures) or be formed in a continuous closed loop. In addition, although not shown in the Figures of the present application, the upper surface 14 of the ring 12 need not necessarily be flat, but could also be conical, pyramidal or another shape, provided that attachment of the integral spring 16 is still possible.

In the preferred embodiments disclosed herein, the spring 16 is a plastic helical spring commonly referred to as a Slinky® (a registered trademark of Poof Products, Inc. of Plymouth, Michigan). Of course, a metal helical spring could also be incorporated into the combination ring and object holder 10 without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. Furthermore, the spring 16 may have various cross-sectional geometries, such as a rectangle or square, without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

The combination ring and object holder 10 further includes a coupling member 18 secured to the opposite end of the spring 16. This coupling member 18 defines a central opening 18A in the upper surface thereof for receiving and retaining an object, such as a lollipop stick, indicated in phantom in Figure 1 and generally indicated by reference numeral 19.

Referring now to Figures 2-5, in one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the spring 16 is secured to the upper surface 14 of the ring 12 by a spring base plate 20. This spring base plate 20 defines an opening 20A adapted to received the lower distal end of the spring 16. Specifically, the lower distal end of the spring 16 is threaded through the opening 20A such that approximately one complete coil of the spring 16 lies beneath the spring base plate 20, as shown in Figure 5. Then, the spring base plate 20 is adhered (e.g., by glue) or otherwise attached to the upper surface 14 of the ring 12, thereby tightly securing the end of the spring 16 between the upper surface 14 of the ring 12 and the spring base plate 20.

Finally, referring again to Figures 1-3, the coupling member 18 is secured to the upper distal end of the spring 16 by an adhesive (e.g., glue). Although not shown in the Figures, the coupling member 18 may also be secured to the spring 16 through various other techniques, including the threading technique described above with reference to the spring base plate 20 and Figures 4-5. In other words, the upper distal end of the spring 16 could threaded into a channel

defined by the coupling member 18 such that approximately one coil of the spring 16 would be enclosed within the channel.

As a further refinement, it is also contemplated that the coupling member 18 itself could define an internal cavity for carrying objects, such as candy or gum pellets. Lastly, in the preferred embodiments described herein and depicted in the Figures, the coupling member 18 has a substantially smooth, rounded upper surface. Although not shown in the Figures, in another contemplated embodiment, the upper surface of the coupling member 18 would have a multi-faceted "jeweled" surface to increase its attractiveness and commercial appeal.

Figures 6-8 provide various perspective views of an alternate preferred embodiment of a combination ring and object holder (generally indicated by reference numeral 110) made in accordance with the present invention. As shown in Figures 6-8, in this alternate embodiment, the lower distal end of the spring 116 is secured directly to the upper surface 114 of the ring 112 by an adhesive (e.g., glue), string or a similar attachment means. Similarly, the upper distal end of the spring 16 is secured to the coupling member 118 by an adhesive (e.g., glue), string or a similar attachment means. As with the embodiment described above with reference to Figures 1-5, the coupling member 118 in this alternate preferred embodiment defines a central opening 118A in the upper surface thereof for receiving and retaining an object, such as a lollipop stick. Also, as with the embodiment described above, it is also contemplated that the coupling member 118 itself could define an internal cavity for carrying objects, such as candy or gum pellets.

It will be obvious to those skilled in the art that other modifications may be made to the invention as described herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.